

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4013

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 5504

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS: ELECTION DAY EARLY REPORT

1. SUMMARY. EARLY VOTER TURNOUT APPEARS TO BE HEAVY. COMELEC ESTIMATES 23-24 MILLION VOTERS ARE REGISTERED, A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE OVER LAST DECEMBER'S REFERENDUM. MRS. MARCOS' FINAL STATEMENT AS AN IBP CANDIDATE IS A XENOPHOBIC CALL FOR NATIONAL UNITY. LAST NIGHT'S LABAN "NOISE BARRAGE" WAS GENERALLY PEACEFUL AND INDEED NOISY. A SMALL BOMB EXPLODED WITHOUT DAMAGE YEASTERDAY IN A SHOPPING MALL, AND TWO OTHER (INCLUDING ONE TOSSED INTO AN EMBASSY COMPOUND) HAVE BEEN FOUND BUT DID NOT DETONATE. THE FOURTH EDITION OF THE OPPOSITION'S UNDERGROUND NEWSPAPER HAS BEEN CIRCULATED. END SUMMARY.

2. EARLY MORNING VOTER TURNOUT IN METRO MEANILA APPEARS TO BE HEAVY AS THE PHILIPPINES TURNS OUT TO VOTE FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE INTERIM LEGISLATURE. THE WEATHER IN MANILA IS TYPICALLY APRIL -- HOT AND SUNNY; ONLY EASTERN MINDANAO IS PREDICTED TO HAVE CLOUDS AND POSSIBLE RAIN. POLLS OPENED AT 7:00 A.M. AND WILL CLOSE AT 5:00 P.M. ALL-DAY ALL-R CHANNEL TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE ELECTION INDICATES LARGE, ORDERLY CROWDS AT POLLING PACES.

3. COMELEC CHAIRMAN PEREZ ON TELEVISION APRIL 6 ESTIMATED
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23 TO 24 MILLION REGISTERED VOTERS COUNTRYWIDE, AN INCREASE OF ONE OR TWO MILLION OVER THAT OF THE DECEMBER 1977 REFERENDUM. PEREZ ATTRIBUTED THE INCREASE TO REGISTRATION OF PREVIOUS BOYCOTTERS. HE ALSO NOTED AN INCREASE OF 300,000 TO 400,000 IN METRO MANILA, WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO AN ELECTION CODE PROVISION PERMITTING MANILA WORKERS WHO NORMALLY VOTE IN THEIR HOME PROVINCES TO REGISTER HERE. PEREZ SAID

545 CANDIDATES ARE CONTESTING THE 165 ELECTED IBP SEATS;
153 CANDIDATES ARE RUNNING FOR MANILA'S 21 SEATS.

4. MRS. MARCOS AS KBL PARTY FRONTRUNNER IN METRO MANILA ISSUED A FINAL WRITTEN STATEMENT CARRIED IN ALL MORNING PAPERS. HER STATEMENT CALLED FOR NATIONA UNIT IN THE FACE OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE. EXCERPTS: "WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BE DIVIDED ANY LONGER BECAUSE THE REAL STRUGGLE HAS JUST BEGUN. AHEAD OF US LIES THE REAL STRUGGLE, NAMELY, THE CONTINUATION OF OUR EFFORTS TO GIVE OUR PEOPLE A NEW HOME FOR TOMORROW AND TO PROTECT THEM AGAINST THREATS BY ALIEN INTERESTS TO SUBVERT THEIR FREEDOM, THEIR FUTURE, AND THE VERY INTEGRITY OF OUR NATIONAL TERRITORY...OUR REAL ENEMIES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THOSE FOREIGN INTERESTS SEEKING TO PERPETUATE THEIR GRIP UPON THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY. TO THESE ENEMIES WE WILL GIVE NO QUARTER AS LONG AS THEY PERSIST IN THEIR EVIL DESIGNS. BUT TO ALL OUR PEOPLE WE OFFER THE HAND OF UNITY AND SOLIDARITY."

5. THE OPPOSITION LABAN GROUP'S FIVE-MINUTE "NOISE BARRAGE" LASTED MUCH OF LAST EVENING, APRIL 6, AND WAS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE IF DECIBELS TRANSLATE INTO VOTES. IN NEW YEAR'S EVE ATMOSPHERE, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, MOSTLY YOUNG BUT CUTTING ACROSS THE AGE AND ECONOMIC SPECTRUMS, WENT INTO THE STREETS ON FOOT OR IN CARS AND MADE NOISE. THE CROWDS WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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REPORTEDLY GENERALLY GOOD-NATURED, ALTHOUGH MEDIA COVERAGE HAS STRESSED INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTIVENESS.

6. A FEW SMALL BOMBS HAVE BEEN REPORTED AROUND THE CITY. DAILY EXPRESS REPORTED APRIL 7 THAT TWO EXPLOSIVE DEVICES WERE FOUND UNDER THE STAGE OF THE FOLK ARTS THEATRE WEDNESDAY. A SMALL BOMB REPORTEDLY EXPLODED IN THE ELEGANT HARRISON PLAZA SHOPPING MALL IN THE TOURIST BELT MID-MORNING APRIL 6; THERE WERE NO INJURIES OR DAMAGE. A SMALL EXPLOSIVE DEVICE WAS TOSSED OVER THE BACK WALL OF THE EMBASSY'S SEAFRONT COMPOUND LAST MIDNIGHT BUT DID NOT EXPLODE. DESIGNED TO EXPLODE ON IMPACT, IT CONTAINED GUNPOWDER, NAILS, METAL AND ROCKS. THE DEVICE HAS BEEN DISMANTLED BY GOP EOD TEAM.

7. THE FOURTH EDITION OF SALONGA'S OPPOSITION NEWS-PAPER, "MALAYANG PHILIPINAS" WAS PUBLISHED APRIL 5. AGAIN LIMITED TO 12 PAGES (4 IN TAGALOG), THE TABLOID FEATURES FRONT-PAGE STORIES ON MANILA'S CARDINAL SIN'S APRIL 2 PASTORAL LETTER URGING THE FAITHFUL TO VOTE THEIR CONSCIENCE AND BE VIGILANT FOR ELECTION ABUSES, AND REPORTS OF MORE STRAW-VOTES FAVORING LABAN. PAGE TWO IS DEVOTED TO A 1974 "POSITION PAPER ON AMERICAN MILITARY BASES" BY A GROUP

CALLED THE ECUMENICAL FELLOWSHIP OF MINISTERS AND LAYMEN,
URGING WITHDRAWAL OF THE BASES AND NEUTRALISM FOR THE
PHILIPPINES AND SOUTHEAST ASIA. WE UNDERSTAND OPPOSITION
IS CONSIDERING BUT HAS NOT YET DECIDED ON PUBLICATION OF
FIFTH, POST-ELECTION EDITION.
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